Draft

Finding of No Significant Impact
Army Residential Communities Initiative
Redstone Arsenal, Alabama

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (Title 40 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] Parts 1500–1508) for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (Title 42 of the *United States Code*, Part 4321 et seq.) and Army regulation (32 CFR Part 651), Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the potential environmental and socioeconomic effects associated with implementing a Community Development and Management Plan (CDMP) under the Army's Residential Communities Initiative (RCI).

Proposed Action

Consistent with authorities contained in the 1996 Military Housing Privatization Initiative, Redstone Arsenal proposes to transfer responsibility for providing housing and ancillary supporting facilities to Redstone Army Family Housing, LLC (RAFH), a limited liability company composed of the Army and Investment Builders, Inc., a private development company. Redstone Arsenal has worked jointly with Investment Builders to develop a CDMP to implement the RCI at the installation.

In accordance with the CDMP, Redstone Arsenal proposes to convey 459 existing family housing units to RAFH and to provide RAFH with a 50-year land lease of approximately 430 acres. RAFH proposes to do major renovations on as many as 85 program units and on as many as two manager homes, modernize as many as 22 program units, make improvements to as many as 118 program units, add amenities and minor improvements to as many as 120 interim units, and demolish as many as 222 units. The Initial Development Plan (IDP) would be implemented over a 3 year period beginning in October 2006, with all construction and demolitions in the IDP being completed within 3 years. Family housing units located in Area 1 and part of Area 6 (120 units total) will be retained as "interim housing units" and will be demolished no later than the 17th year of the project, approximately October 2023. The required program units plus the allowed interim units sets the inventory at 350 units for years 1 through 17, and then reduces the inventory to the required program inventory of 230 units in 2023.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve military family housing at Redstone Arsenal. With respect to contemporary standards of livability and comparable housing in the surrounding community, many of the housing units on the installation are substantially below acceptable standards in terms of size, configuration, safety, condition, services, and amenities. The proposed action is needed to provide affordable, quality housing and ancillary supporting facilities to soldiers and their families. This would be accomplished by improving existing family housing and by addressing the present deficit in the number of available family housing units on the installation.

Alternatives Considered

Alternatives to the proposed action that the Army considered were partial privatization of family housing, sole reliance on the private sector for housing, and leasing of housing. These alternatives were found unreasonable or unfeasible and therefore were not further evaluated. As prescribed by CEQ regulations, the EA also evaluated the no action alternative, which would consist of the Army's continuing to provide for the family housing needs of its personnel through use of traditional military construction and maintenance funding obtained through the congressional authorization and appropriations process.

Factors Considered in Determining That No Environmental Impact Statement Is Required

The EA, which is attached and incorporated by reference into this draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), examined the potential effects of the proposed action and the no action alternative on several resource areas and areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern. Implementation of the proposed action would result in a combination of minor short-term and long-term adverse and beneficial effects, as described below.

- *Land Use*. Long-term minor beneficial effects on installation land use would be expected. No land use incompatibilities would be expected because no housing construction is planned for areas outside existing housing areas.

- *Aesthetic and Visual Resources.* Short-term minor adverse and long-term moderate beneficial effects would be expected. During the construction and renovation phase of the RCI program, vistas from various vantage points on the installation would be intruded upon by construction equipment, construction material staging areas, and bare land dotted with buildings undergoing construction or demolition. Beneficial effects, however, would be expected from implementation of the CDMP, which would achieve aesthetically harmonious communities through the use of cohesive and regionally appropriate architectural design characteristics, landscape planning that focuses on using native plant species and screening visually intrusive structures and activities, and the inclusion of green space.

- *Air Quality*. Short-term minor adverse effects would be expected. Construction equipment would generate air pollutants in addition to those already emitted at the installation.

- *Noise*. Short-term minor adverse and long-term minor beneficial effects on noise levels in the housing areas would be expected.

- *Geology and Soils.* Short-term minor adverse effects on soils would be expected because of some erosion during site construction. No effects on topography, geology, or prime farmland would be expected.

- *Water Resources*. Short-term negligible adverse effects on surface waters would be expected. Erosion following soil-disturbing construction activities could lead to a short-term increase in surface runoff to McDonald Creek. No effects on floodplains or groundwater would be expected.

- *Biological Resources*. Short- and long-term negligible adverse effects on vegetation and wildlife would be expected. Vegetation and wildlife habitat within the RCI footprint are highly disturbed except for some forest edges on the periphery. Landscaping vegetation in existing housing areas could be damaged or removed during the RCI project. New landscaping using native species, however, would be planted following construction. Common wildlife species habituated to human presence would be expected to be displaced during housing construction and to return after the construction was completed. No impacts on federally or state-listed threatened or endangered species or species of concern would be expected because these species are not present in or adjacent to the RCI footprint.

  Short-term negligible indirect adverse effects on wetlands would be expected. Wetland areas near Housing Areas 1, 6, and 10a would not be directly affected by the RCI program, though an indirect effect as sediment runoff from construction areas could occur. If required, RAFH would obtain a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit and the permit would specify any required compensatory mitigation.

- *Cultural Resources*. No effects would be expected. No known cultural resources are present within the RCI project area.

- *Socioeconomics*. Short-term direct and indirect minor beneficial effects would be expected on economic development and demographics. The expenditures associated with demolition, construction, and renovation of family housing units and associated facilities at Redstone Arsenal would increase sales volume, employment, and income in the ROI. Long-term major direct beneficial effects on on-post family housing would be expected. Short-term direct minor adverse effects on quality of life would be expected due to construction noise. In the long term, overall quality of life for soldiers and their families would be greatly improved through implementation of the RCI at Redstone Arsenal because of the improved condition of on-post family housing, as well as the overall residential community. No effects on law enforcement or fire protection services, medical services, family support services, shops and other services, or environmental justice would be expected.

  Long-term minor adverse effects on schools would be expected. More families could live off-post after implementation of the RCI project; because schools receive a lower level of federal impact aid for children living off-post, federal impact aid to schools would decrease.

  Long-term beneficial effects on recreation would be expected because, along with existing facilities, additional recreational facilities that would improve recreational opportunities throughout the housing developments would be constructed as part of the RCI project.

  Short-term minor adverse and long-term beneficial effects on the protection of children would be expected. In the short term, because construction sites can be enticing to children, construction activity could be an increased safety risk. Long-term beneficial effects on children would also be expected because of reduced exposure to hazardous materials as a result of the RCI project.

- *Transportation*. Short-term minor adverse and long-term minor beneficial effects on transportation would be expected. During RCI construction and renovation, traffic congestion could increase from the addition of construction vehicles, particularly during rush hours. Construction vehicles also would likely increase wear and tear on installation roads. Because of the long-term reduction in housing inventory, though, long-term beneficial effects on housing area traffic would be expected. Long-term beneficial effects would also be expected from roadway changes made during housing development.

- *Utilities*. Long-term minor adverse effects on landfills would arise from the generation of construction debris from housing demolition and refurbishment, which would consume landfill capacity. Long-term beneficial effects on utility systems would result from the installation of efficient fixtures and appliances.

- *Hazardous and Toxic Substances*. Long-term minor beneficial effects would be expected. There would be an overall reduction in asbestos-containing materials and lead-based paint in residential areas.

- *Cumulative Effects.* Non-RCI construction projects proposed on Redstone Arsenal that are in the vicinity of the RCI footprint would be the primary source of cumulative effects. Cumulative effects on air quality, noise, and traffic would be expected. Because effects caused by construction projects are short-lived and generally confined to a small area surrounding the projects, none of the effects would be expected to be significant.

The following resources would be affected by implementation of the no action alternative.

- *Aesthetics and Visual Resources*. Long-term minor adverse effects would be expected. Under the no action alternative, the Army would continue to be responsible for maintenance and renovation of existing housing and for new housing construction as necessary. Lack of sufficient funding for this work and the existence of an extensive backlog of work indicate that housing overall would deteriorate over time. Such deterioration would be expected to adversely affect the visual and aesthetic quality of the housing areas.

- *Socioeconomics*. Long-term minor adverse effects on housing and quality of life would be expected. Continuation of current family housing programs would perpetuate deficiencies in quality of life for soldiers and their dependents. The availability of affordable, quality family housing is a key factor in quality of life and is often given high priority by soldiers and their families. The Army would continue to do regular maintenance on existing housing, as well as some renovation and demolition, but it would be on a constrained budget over approximately a 30-year period, compared to the 10-year period under the proposed action. Over the 30 years, some housing units would deteriorate, becoming unsuitable for occupancy.

  Long-term minor adverse effects on the protection of children would be expected. Under current conditions the hazardous materials identified in on-post housing units are not health hazards because they have been contained or removed. As homes would deteriorate, however, the risk of children's exposure to hazardous materials (such as chipping lead-based paint or cracked asbestos-containing tiles) would increase.

- *Hazardous Materials and Waste.* Long-term minor adverse effects could occur. Because of the extensive maintenance backlog and budget constraints, housing units might contain special hazards such as lead-based paint and asbestos-containing materials. Redstone Arsenal would continue to abate these potential hazards in accordance with applicable laws, but abatement would extend over a much longer period than that under the proposed action, thereby increasing the possibility of exposure.

Mitigation

Recommended mitigation actions are identified below.

Land Use
- Adhere to guidelines outlined in the Redstone Arsenal Real Property Master Plan when renovating housing areas.
- Coordinate site planning for the new housing units with the design of other proposed construction projects in the vicinity of the RCI footprint to minimize potential adverse effects on both on- and off-post residents.

Aesthetics and Visual Resources
- Design housing units in a regionally appropriate architectural style.
- Revegetate housing areas with native vegetation.
- Maintain trees and native vegetation wherever possible.
- Place new utility lines underground to improve aesthetics.

Air Quality
- Spray water on work sites to reduce fugitive dust emissions.

Noise
- Limit construction activities to daylight hours.
- Consider the incorporation of tree buffers or other noise-attenuating measures into community designs to separate noise-producing land uses from housing areas.

Geology and Soils

- Avoid construction near existing sinkholes. Perform site evaluations for potential sinkholes. Implement remedial actions, such as filling or plugging, if necessary.
- Use state-recommended best management practices (BMPs) to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation in surface waters.

Water Resources

- Implement state-recommended BMPs to control soil erosion and runoff.
- Implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan.
- Reseed and revegetate areas following construction activities to minimize sedimentation.

Biological Resources

- Implement RCI guidelines to preserve natural features in new housing developments and landscape yards and roadsides with native vegetation.
- Obtain and implement all requirements of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wetland permit if wetlands are disturbed, including any required mitigation actions.

Cultural Resources

- No mitigation measures would be necessary for cultural resources. Should any cultural resources be found during development, procedures in the installation Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan would be adhered to.

Socioeconomics and Protection of Children

- Secure construction vehicles and equipment when not in use.
- Place barriers and "no trespassing" signs around construction sites where practicable.
- Avoid the use of building products containing hazardous materials.

Traffic and Transportation

- Route and schedule all RCI construction vehicle traffic to minimize traffic delays and congestion.
- Locate construction material staging areas to minimize traffic impacts.
- Incorporate traffic-calming measures in the vicinity of housing.
- Incorporate overall design improvements, such as walkways and bicycle paths, to reduce reliance on vehicles and to create more connected, pedestrian-friendly communities.

Utilities

Potable Water:

- No mitigation is necessary; however, install water-efficient control devices, such as low-flow showerheads, faucets, and toilets, in all new facilities.

Energy:

- No mitigation is necessary; however, install energy-efficient interior and exterior lighting fixtures and controls in all new units. All new units would be built to EnergyStar energy efficiency standards.

Recycling:

- No mitigation is necessary; however, household commodities (e.g., newspaper, magazines, alkaline batteries, used motor oil, aluminum and steel cans, and plastic bottles and jugs) shall be collected as part of the RAFH residential curbside recycling program.

Hazardous and Toxic Materials

- Before initiating renovation activities, evaluate environmental impacts and address in accordance with the appropriate regulatory requirements.
- Implement measures to control airborne asbestos and lead dust.
- Conduct lead-in-soil testing before construction activities and address in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Perform evaluation and disposal of excavated soils contaminated with lead, pesticides/chlordane, and hazardous materials in accordance with applicable regulations.
- Perform evaluation and disposal of demolition materials in accordance with applicable regulations at the time of demolition.

- Establish smoking areas and prohibit open flames near flammable materials.
- Use proper storage and handling, paying attention to tasks at hand, and responsible driving.

Public Comment

The Environmental Assessment and draft Finding of No Significant Impact are available for review and comment for 30 days, beginning January 25, 2006, through February 24, 2006. Copies of the EA and draft FNSI can be obtained by contacting Mr. Russell Pearsall at U.S. Army Garrison, AMSAM-RA-DPW-MP-RCI, Bldg 4488, Room A307B, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, 35898-5000, or by e-mail requests to russell.l.pearsall@us.army.mil. Copies are available for review at the Huntsville Main Library (915 Monroe St., Huntsville) and on the installation at the Public Affairs Office (5300 Martin Rd), the Post Library (Bldg 3323), and the Scientific Information Center (Bldg 4484). The documents can also be reviewed online at http://www.garrison.redstone.army.mil/sites/directorates/dpw/emd/emd_home.asp. Comments on the EA and draft FNSI should be submitted to Mr. Pearsall at the physical address or email address given above by no later than February 24, 2006.

Conclusion

Based on the EA, it has been determined that implementation of the proposed action will have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts on the quality of the natural or human environments at Redstone Arsenal. Because no significant environmental impacts will result from implementation of the proposed action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

REVIEWED BY:

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